

South Precinct Email Community Newsletter
December 15, 2008



Dear Community Friends;

Freezing Weather, Snow

We want to pass on some tips on increasing your safety during cold winter weather. Freezing temperatures often results in broken pipes, flooding and damage to private property. They also mean hazardous road conditions, possible downed trees and power lines, and power outages. As it seems the freezing weather, ice and snow that will be with us for a while, here are some tips that can help prevent costly damage and repairs to your home - and keep you safe on the streets:

Winter Safety Tips

- Shut off outside faucets, drain the water and protect them by insulating them with rags or foam covers. Pipes in exposed or unheated areas (attics, basements and garages) should be wrapped with tape and insulating materials, available at local hardware stores. Drain and remove all outdoor hoses, and shut off and drain in-ground sprinkler systems.
- Once the temperature drops below freezing, protect indoor sink pipes that are against exterior walls, by opening under-sink cabinet doors, allowing heat to circulate. During severe cold, allow the faucet farthest from your front door to slowly drip cold water. Set your thermostat no lower than 55 degrees Fahrenheit, day or night (even if you are away).
- Do not leave water running in unoccupied buildings.
- Please don't use hair dryers to thaw frozen pipes!
- Know where the main water shut-off valve *inside* your home is located and how to shut it off. Also, know where the shut-off from the street water main *to* your home is located. If you need to shut-off the water from the main in the street to your home, ensure you have the proper tool. Contact Seattle Public Utilities at (206) 386-1800 for questions about shutting off water mains and the tools needed to do so.
- If a water pipe breaks, immediately close the main shut-off valve to stop excessive flooding. If you cannot turn off the main shut-off valve, Seattle Public Utilities customers can call (206) 386-1800 and a crew will turn off the water at the meter for a standard service charge.
- Help keep street drains clear by removing snow and other debris — if it can be done safely. As the snow melts, blockages in the gutters or drains will hinder runoff, increase the risk of flooding.
- If an inlet or street drain appears to be blocked by snow or debris, try to safely clear a channel to provide a path for the runoff. If the drain cannot be cleared, or if the cause of the blockage or flooding is uncertain, call Seattle Public Utilities at (206) 386-1800.
- Heavy rain following closely after heavy snowfall can increase the chance of landslides due to soil saturation that reduces slope stability. Trees may also be more prone to fall in high winds when the ground is saturated. Property owners on slopes are advised to clear both drains on their buildings and storm drains near their property. If a landslide damages your property and you have an immediate concern for your safety, leave the premises and call 9-1-1.
- Seattle property owners with structures affected by or endangered by a landslide may contact the Department of Planning and Development at (206) 684-7899, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., for a rapid evaluation of damage. Such evaluations are not meant to provide a comprehensive assessment, which will need to be completed by a private structural or geotechnical engineer.
- Please exercise caution when going out doors during a storm. Downed power lines, objects in the road and fallen trees are not easy to spot at night.
- Treat all power lines as an electrical hazard until rendered safe by your electrical utility. In Seattle, contact Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle City Light at (206) 684-3000 to report power outages and/or downed power lines.
- Exercise caution when driving and walking! Cold temperatures often mean "black ice," which is treacherous for vehicles and pedestrians alike. Be careful when engaging hills and inclines. When driving, give yourself plenty of distance between you and the car in front of you. Take it slow and easy. If you don't need to go out, stay off the road until road conditions improve.

- ***Do not use gas generators or charcoal heaters indoors.*** The potential for carbon monoxide poisoning is high. In previous years, use of these devices indoors for heating and power generation resulted in injuries and fatalities.

Personal Preparedness

The Seattle Office of Emergency Management offers skills training classes in the areas of Disaster First Aid, Light Search & Rescue Training and Fire Extinguisher and Utility Safety among others. Additionally, this office provides training in **SNAP - Seattle Neighborhoods Actively Prepare**. The program is offered throughout the city to help you, your family and your neighborhoods become better prepared for the next disaster. Learn how to put together a disaster supplies kit, create a family disaster plan and organize with your neighbors to take care of each other when disaster strikes.

For more information about emergency preparedness, contact the Public Education Section of the Seattle Office of Emergency Management at 206-233-7123. Also visit their website at www.seattle.gov/emergency. Other emergency preparedness resources include www.seattleredcross.org, www.ready.gov, and www.govlink.org/3days3ways/index.htm.

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator